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C O N F I D E N T I A L BUENOS AIRES 001025

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SUBJECT: MEETING WITH ARGENTINE DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER:
VENEZUELA, CRISTINA KIRCHNER, BILATERAL RELATIONS

REF: SECSTATE 61378

Classified By: Ambassador E. Anthony Wayne, Reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

11. (C) Summary: Argentine Deputy Foreign Minister Roberto Garcia Moritan invited Ambassador to coffee May 22. He wanted to verify that the incident between security details during the Washington visit of Argentine First Lady Cristina Kirchner was behind us and would have not negative aftereffects for bilateral relations. He also commented positively on the travels of the First Lady, including to Mexico. He noted that she gives higher priority to international affairs and to standing by "principles" than does her husband, which bodes well if she is elected President, he said. She plans to travel to Geneva and then to Spain in the next month. In response to the Ambassador's points about worrisome Venezuela-Iran ties (see reftel), the Deputy Minister said that Argentina shares some of those concerns, especially related to terrorism and travel controls. He added that Venezuela is a "very, very, very" difficult partner in Mercosur, and usually arrives at meetings full of ideas for action which need to be rolled back. He cited as an example Venezuela's heavy pressure at the ongoing meeting of Foreign and Economic Ministers in Paraguay to criticize the U.S. on the Posada Carriles case. Nevertheless, he said, he believes Mercosur is helping to moderate and set rhetorical limits on Venezuela. End Summary.

12. (C) First Lady's Visit: Acting and Deputy Foreign Minister Roberto Garcia Moritan invited the Ambassador in for a one on one coffee May 22. While the discussion covered a range of topics, Garcia Moritan wanted to seek clarification about the scuffle which took place between security details on the margins of the American Jewish Congress dinner in Washington May 4. At that time, there was an incident between members of the Secret Service detail protecting Colombian President Uribe and the Argentine agents protecting Argentine First Lady and Senator Cristina Kirchner. Argentine Ambassador Bordon subsequently attended a meeting in the State Department where the main message was to put the incident behind us, Garcia Moritan said. He explained that this was the approach which Argentina would like to take, and in the view of the GOA no further meetings are required unless informed by the U.S. that some further discussion is needed to avoid any follow-on disruption of bilateral relations. He asked the Ambassador to get verification from

Washington that the Secret Service as well as the State Department considered the matter closed, and that we can stay focused on the positive aspects of the visit of the First Lady. The Ambassador said that he had heard nothing from Washington on the matter since the week of the visit, but agreed to seek clarification and assurance. (Action Request: Can Department please advise on the status of this matter. For many reasons, it would not be good to have this issue become the subject of a public difference between the two governments. At present, the First Lady's visit is seen as a positive in our bilateral relations.)

13. (C) The Deputy Foreign Minister (protect) said that Cristina Kirchner's interest in foreign policy bodes well for Argentina if she becomes the presidential candidate and wins. President Nestor Kirchner has little interest in foreign policy, and Argentina has suffered from an absence of top-level foreign policy. The difference was evident in the positive impact of Mrs. Kirchner's visit to Mexico on the bilateral relationship, he said. In addition, Cristina is more interested in sticking to principles and protecting human rights than her husband, who tends to be very "pragmatic" about such things. He said Mrs. Kirchner plans to travel to an ILO meeting in Geneva and then to Spain in June.

14. (C) Venezuela: Ambassador took the opportunity to raise U.S. concerns about the Venezuela-Iran relationship, noting that we would be sharing these concerns privately with others in the hemisphere (reftel). Garcia Moritan said that Venezuela was a "very, very, very" difficult partner. He said they came to every meeting with many ideas that they sought to convince others to accept and that it took many painstaking hours to walk them away from many of these ill-conceived notions. He noted that he had earlier received a call from the gathering of Mercosur Foreign and Finance Ministers in Paraguay to report on the tough time his minister was having in redirecting Venezuela's proposals. He said they were really pushing hard for a condemnation of the U.S. handling of the Posada Carriles case, which Argentina knows is being handled in the U.S. court system. (Later on May 23, DCM delivered to MFA fuller points on the Posada Carriles case received subsequently by email.)

15. (C) The Deputy Minister said his Ministry is under instructions to be patient and to try to coax Venezuela along) this is very trying. The Deputy Minister said he believes Mercosur is having a moderating effect, at a minimum on Venezuela's words. He added that Argentina shares our concerns about Iranian and other persons' access to Venezuela via flights from Iran and Syria and the easy availability of Venezuelan travel documents to others. (In a separate conversation the deputy head of Argentina's intelligence service confirmed serious concerns on Argentina's part and the careful attention being given to the Iranian threat by the Argentine service.)

WAYNE